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BOOK WORLD

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# BOOK BUZZ

By Marcia Seligson

## Fake!

Humorists like the late Lenny Bruce and Paul Krassner, editor of *The Realist*, have operated on the premise that the best satire is reality — it's infinitely more absurd than any satirist's imaginings. It becomes evident when spoof is taken seriously. Like that society for clothing naked animals a few years back, or *Report from Iron Mountain*, the exposé of a top-secret government study declaring peace impractical and undesirable.

Harper & Row recently published *Annual Reprot* (sic), written by humorist William Zinsner of *Life* magazine. *Annual Reprot* (an erratum slip is enclosed expressing confidence that stockholders would not wish to incur the expense of correcting the error) looks exactly like the ones that come in the mail from Olin Mathieson or Standard Oil, except this is from the National Refractory & Brake Company, and it's a spoof. Even I know that expressions like "significant movement toward profitability" or "overcome underutilization of capacity" have to be a joke. Right?

Well, Harper sent the reprot, also three different press releases about the activities of N.R. & B., to business editors through-



out the country, knowing full well that they would be amused at the lively satire. In one case Stuart Harris, Harper's publicity director, received a call from a major wire service requesting more information on the company's activities in Guam (one release detailed the reactivation of N.R. & B.'s prototype filter house on Guam, "designed to convert ordinary kelp into vinyl foam for lining the interior of Vulcan II 'Mars probe' missiles"). Another editor, from a prominent Southern newspaper, wrote a feature story on the release, discovered it was a joke when a reader called him, and then threatened to report solid old Harper & Row to the S.E.C.